

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 1979

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR,IN,PK,US

SUBJECT: PRESS CRITICISM OF REPORTED U.S. ARMS SALES TO
PAKISTAN CONTINUES

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE INDIAN PRESS COVERAGE FEB. 11 OF PAKISTAN
PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S ABC TELEVISION INTERVIEW WAS LIMITED
TO BRIEF WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS WHICH APPEAR NON-PROMINENTLY
IN MOST DELHI PAPERS. AIR/TV DID NOT BROADCAST THE INTERVIEW
STORY. COMMENTS WERE BOTH CRITICAL AND BALANCED.
END SUMMARY.

1. CREDITED TO THE PRESS TRUST OF INDIA, MOST PAPERS CARRIED
BRIEF ITEMS ABOUT THE BHUTTO INTERVIEW. ONLY THE COMMUNIST DAILY
PATRIOT AND THE STATESMAN GAVE THE STORY ANY SPECIAL PLAY ON FRONT
PAGES. HEADLINES REFLECTED DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS: "BHUTTO CITES
'VOLATILE REGION' FOR U.S. ARMS" (STATESMAN); "BHUTTO OPTIMISTIC
GETTING ARMS" (INDIAN EXPRESS); "NO FINAL DECISION
ON U.S. ARMS AID TO PINDI" (TIMES OF INDIA), AND "IF ARMS FOR IRAN,
WHY NOT FOR PINDI?" (PATRIOT).

2. THE NEWS ACCOUNTS QUOTED THE PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER WAS
"HOPEFUL" THE U.S. WOULD LIFT ITS ARMS EMBARGO ALTHOUGH A "FINAL
DECISION" HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN. SEEKING "PRIMARILY DEFENSIVE
WEAPONS," MR. BHUTTO DEFENDED HIS REQUEST BY SAYING THAT PAKISTAN
WAS IN A "VOLATILE REGION." THE ITEMS ALSO QUOTED THE PREMIER
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SAYING THAT WHILE INDIA HAS BEEN RECEIVING "MASSIVE SOVIET ARMS,"

THE U.S. HAD CUT OFF ARMS SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN.

3. THE STATESMAN FIRST EDIT, "THE REAL TEST," COMMENTED: "JUDGEMENT NEEDS TO BE SUSPENDED UNTIL IT IS KNOWN WHAT, IN FACT, WILL BE SUPPLIED" BECAUSE "THE TEST WILL BE IN THE NATURE AND VOLUME OF SUPPLIES." IT STRESSED THAT NEW DELHI "CANNOT DENY PAKISTAN THE RIGHT TO ARM ITSELF WITH EXTERNAL AID" BUT "CAN OBJECT TO AN INCREASE IN ISLAMABAD'S MILITARY STRENGTH THAT MIGHT REASONABLY BE REGARDED AS A THREAT TO INDIA'S SECURITY OR TO REGIONAL STABILITY."

4. THE PAPER ALSO EDIT-PAGED EDITOR N.J. NANPORIA'S "ONE POINT OF VIEW" COLUMN IN WHICH HE NOTED THAT INDO-U.S. RELATIONS ARE "THIN AND GETTING THINNER." REFERRING TO THE REPORTED U.S. DECISION TO LIFT THE ARMS EMBARGO TO PAKISTAN, HE COMMENTED: "NEW DELHI SEEMS TO BE FOREVER PROTESTING ON THIS ISSUE...A BAN IS AT BEST AN ARTIFICIAL AND TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT..AND IT IS, MOREOVER, NOT SOMETHING ON WHICH INDO-US RELATIONS CAN BE BASED." HE CHARGED THAT NEW DELHI'S EXPRESSIONS OF DISAPPROVAL "HAVE THE HOLLOW RING OF BEING ONLY FOR THE RECORD" AND "WHAT IS BEING PLAYED IS DOMESTIC POLITICS." IN THIS CONTEXT, HE QUESTIONED: "WHAT THEN IS THE POINT OF CHAVAN'S PROTEST? IS IT REALLY ADDRESSED TO WASHINGTON OR TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AND THE CONGRESS 'PROGRESSIVES?'"

5. IN FURTHER COMMENT, NANPORIA HELD THAT "SOUTH BLOCK..HAS YET TO GRASP THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF THE U.S.-SOVIET DETENTE, AND PARTICULARLY THEIR BEARING ON WEST ASIA AFTER THE USE OF THE OIL WEAPON...BHUTTO AND WASHINGTON ARE MAKING MOVES IN FOREIGN POLICY AND, MEANWHILE, NEW DELHI IS PLAYING PARTY POLITICS. IN THE RESULT WASHINGTON HAS VIRTUALLY WRITTEN IT OFF IN FOREIGN POLICY TERMS... NEW DELHI'S EFFORTS TO CULTIVATE WEST ASIA HAVE YIELDED LITTLE... AND IT IS RIDICULOUS TO ASSUME THAT IT CAN MAKE ANY HEADWAY IN WEST ASIA UNTIL IT DEFINES ITS ATTITUDES TO THE UNITED STATES WITH CLARITY AND CONVICTION; AND THIS IT CAN DO ONLY BY MEANS OF FOREIGN POLICY AND NOT BY PLAYING POLITICS AT HOME."

6. ALL INDIA RADIO BROADCAST COMMENTS FROM "AN AUTHORITY ON MILITARY AFFAIRS" AND A "POLITICAL EXPERT." DISCUSSING THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE BHUTTO VISIT, LT. COL. GAUTAM SHARMA OBSERVED THAT "AMERICA IS INTERESTED IN STRENGTHENING PAKISTAN BY GIVING MORE UNCLASSIFIED

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ARMS" SO THAT IT CAN "WATCH THE ACTIVITIES OF CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION" FROM PAKISTAN. ALSO, "WHILE REMAINING IN THE PAKISTAN TERRITORY, AMERICA CAN PRESSURIZE US AND OUR POLICIES." DR. SATISH KUMAR POINTED OUT THAT "AMERICA WANTS TO CONTINUE ITS INTERFERENCE IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD" AND WOULD LIKE PAKISTAN "TO ALWAYS DEPEND" ON THE U.S. "FOR SOMETHING OR THE OTHER" SO THAT TENSION IN THE SUB-CONTINENT CONTINUES. SCHNEIDER

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